

<p><b>Contact</b>  <b>IAP2013</b>  <b>Rules and Scenario</b></p>
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# 1 Scenario

The year is 2037; the date, January 24<sup>1</sup>. First contact with an alien species: the Aspects. Contact is simultaneous around the world, with hallucinatory figures appearing and speaking in alien but comprehensible tongues to the entire world.

The world in 2037 looks much like today's. A few significant changes and events of the last two and a half decades:

- Gentech Corporation revolutionized medical production in the third world with a portable drug factory, only one step away from a cornucopia machine. Unfortunately, the machine proved to be just as capable of producing illegal recreational drugs as legitimate medicine, and the resulting war between drug gangs ended with a nuclear strike on Caracas, Venezuela in 2027. The nuke was sold to the drug lords by Pakistan, with the end result that the US and NATO have been at war with the rapidly failing state of Pakistan ever since; several other countries, including Russia, have also intervened, sending troops to support the US forces. The war has been brutal, and the US's leading general, General Harold Stirling was removed from his position after being accused of war crimes. The original drug factory machine has been removed from production worldwide, and banned by international treaties.
- A couple of genius researchers at CyberCorp™ discovered true artificial intelligence in 2032; humanity responded by thoroughly panicking, having watched rather too many movies. Laws have been passed in almost every country on Earth denying non-humans citizenship, rights, and an independent existence. Non-humans are legally property, if they are legally allowed to exist at all, and mobs afraid of having their jobs stolen by the new technology have been known to riot and destroy any factory that is even rumored to have AIs. As a result, it is unclear if any AIs still exist, or if they have all been destroyed.
- A series of commercial space stations have been built orbiting Earth. While a few are used for tourism, the vast majority are either owned by, or rent space to, various corporations (large or small, and of more or less legitimacy); office and laboratory space outside of any Earth legal jurisdiction can be worth quite a lot of money. Game takes place on SpaceStation One, owned by Virgin Galactic, one of the most prominent and respectable of the lot.
- The European Union was badly shaken by the massive Euro crisis of the teens. France and Germany managed, finally, to bail out the rest of the union for long enough that the Euro zone is back on its feet, if still a bit insecure. The UK's Independence Party took the opportunity to pull England out of the EU (although Scotland turned around and joined again as soon as it had independence). Serbia, Macedonia, and Albania have all joined.
- Global warming has been continuing at a rapid pace. The warming of the Arctic in particular has produced a major rush for oil wealth in the formerly ice-covered seas; Siberia and the Canadian Arctic are boom areas, attracting a multitude of investors and speculators. Flooding and vicious monsoon seasons are wreaking havoc in low-lying areas like Bangladesh, Indonesia, and the Netherlands.
- Major international corporations, flush with cash after sitting on their holdings during the Great Recession, went on a buying spree as the economy recovered. A handful of megacorps now control large swaths of the global economy. Particularly prominent among them are Modern Military Solutions, Inc., which focuses on arms sales and government defense contracting around the globe; Greene and Greene, Inc., which provides "green" products, primarily for the consumer market, and has been rising in value along with the global average temperature; CyberCorp™, which focuses on the technology market from cellphones to servers to cyberware; and Google, Inc., which continues to control the majority of the world's information. Some smaller corporations are also familiar to those in the know, including the Virgin Group, owner of Virgin Galactic (and thus SpaceStation One) along with Virgin Airlines, Virgin Music, Virgin Books, Virgin Drinks...; and the Kirijo Group, a (somewhat eccentric, for a corporation) research and development corp that's known for out-there investments and cutting-edge innovations.

The hallucination-delivered announcement that all of Earth heard yesterday went approximately as follows, taking into account that it wasn't spoken in any kind of human tongue:

"We are the Aspects, the sundered half of humanity's soul. Your crimes against us are great, and we demand recompense. You have twenty-four hours to send your chosen to meet us. They will have one week to satisfy us, or we will declare war." It was accompanied by visions of a strange looking creature with piercing yellow eyes that seemed to be staring straight through you, followed by images that those in the know recognized as SpaceStation One.

<sup>1</sup>From a player perspective, the dates and days should line up nicely.

The responses have been varied. There have been riots and mass panic in a number of cities around the world, as well as a number of spontaneous religious celebrations, mostly of the “thousands of people gather at a mountain and wait for the alien spaceships to take them away” variety. Most governments have issued bland requests to their citizens to remain calm, and pundits on every channel and blog have been speculating about the possible origins of the vision, risk to humanity from a war, necessity for a nuclear first strike... in other words, about what you’d expect from a world full of surprised people with no clue what’s actually going on.

Any major government with access to spacecraft has sent representatives to the station; Virgin Galactic, taking full advantage of their regular shuttle service and ownership of the station, has a full flight up. Speculation is rampant about who made it on board; rumor has it that bids for tickets were in the billions of dollars, but that Richard Branson gave them out to the people who he found most interesting instead.

## 2 General Rules

This document only covers rules specific to Contact; see the “Basic Rules” document for basic Guild Game rules.

### 2.1 Bodies

Bodies are three-hands bulky.

### 2.2 Searches

No pat-down searches; all searches of a person are total searches. If someone searches you, they also find items in any bags you’re carrying.

Do not leave in-game items in a bag you’re not carrying around. Don’t search player bags.

## 3 Items

### 3.1 Item Types

This game features three different kinds of items: *regular items*, which are on **white** paper; *virtual items*, which are on **yellow** paper (representing computer files); and *mental items*, which are on **purple**<sup>2</sup> paper (representing thoughts and memories).

Virtual (yellow) items can be shown to other players. **You can willingly give virtual items to someone else, but they cannot be stolen from you, even if you are helpless or dead.** They are not found when you are searched.

Mental (purple) items can be shown to other players; this represents you describing the information in a convincing way or showing notes you have made. You can’t give anyone a mental item; any notes you make are insufficiently detailed to completely convey the information. They cannot be stolen from you, even if you are helpless or dead. They are not found when you are searched.

#### 3.1.1 Copying Items

Virtual (yellow) items can be copied, unless the item card says “uncopyable”. Notebooks and item cards have different copying mechanisms, however.

Any number of yellow item cards (including blueprints) can be copied by spending a few minutes in a Computer Cluster with the item card(s). Blank yellow item cards are available in the Box Room.

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<sup>2</sup>or pink

Yellow notebooks can also be copied by visiting a Computer Cluster, but there is an extensive period of processing time; the computer will be churning overnight, and the results will be added to your account (read: dropped in your box folder) the next day. You can only copy one notebook per night. When you start a notebook copy, e-mail the GMs ([contact-gms@mit.edu](mailto:contact-gms@mit.edu)) with an appropriate subject line indicating which notebook you need copied and who the copy should be delivered to. If an excessive number of notebooks are copied, the station computers may become overloaded and your processing may be delayed.<sup>3</sup>

You cannot copy purple items unless you know otherwise. Even if you find a way to copy purple items, you still can't copy "uncopyable" items.

### 3.2 RTIs

A common type of item in game are RTIs (Random Technical Items); these are miscellaneous collections of components that are useful for various skills, building projects, etc. RTIs come in two flavors: Tech (also called "Earth" or "mundane") RTIs, and Ouranios RTIs. RTIs can be represented with either an item card or a Lego with a sticker on it (available in the SpaceStation One Common Area (34-301) and other places in game); these are interchangeable. Use whichever is most convenient for what you're doing. In general, legos are the correct choice for building prototypes (see the Research and Engineering public greensheet), while cards are the correct choice for shadowruns (where you frequently need to consume items). Attaching a lego requires a particular skill, as indicated below.

Tech RTIs can be acquired in various locations around SpaceStation One; humans do not know at game start how Ouranios items can be acquired.

#### Tech RTIs

- Box of Biotech Supplies: Dark Gray lego; skill: Biology
- Box of Chemicals: Light Gray lego; skill: Chemistry
- Box of Electronics: Black lego; skill: Electrical Engineering
- Box of Stock Metal: White lego; skill: Mechanical Engineering

#### Ouranios RTIs

- Hope: Blue lego; skill: Spirituality or Metaphysics
- Fear: Green lego; skill: Psychology or Metaphysics
- Symbol: Red lego; skill: Art or Metaphysics
- Metaphor: Yellow lego; skill: Literature or Metaphysics

### 3.3 Experience and Weaknesses

There are two kinds of special Mental Items in this game: Experience and Weaknesses.

**Experience:** Experience is, basically, a form of mental currency consisting of a person's most vivid memories. **Experience is not copyable, and it is not transferable unless you know otherwise.** Most human characters start game with a certain amount of Experience, generated over the course of their lifetime. In addition, **human characters generate 1 additional Experience per day**; some mechanics may allow you to create more.

Experience item cards contain blank lines for the character name, the experience description (what happened that was worth remembering), and an "alignment". **Experience cards are not valid items until they have a character name and experience description, however simple.** Don't fill out the alignment field unless you know otherwise. Please fill out any Experience cards you start game with; make up reasonable-sounding Significant Experiences based on your starting sheet.<sup>4</sup>

When you generate a new experience, fill in at least one sentence worth of description; for the one automatic experience each day, pick something interesting and memorable that happened to you that day. If you generated experience through a mechanic, the experience's text should be something relating to the mechanic; if you got it for a scientific discovery, for example, write something about how it feels to discover something, or how nice it was to work with your partner on research.

<sup>3</sup>Please don't overload this system; if you don't actually want a copy of the bloody notebook, don't make the GMs prod one for you. If you think you might want one later, just make yourself an item card and ask the GMs for the full notebook as needed.

<sup>4</sup>The GMs apologize profusely for running out of time to customize them all for you.

Blank experience cards will be available in the box room and the Human Mechanics Room (4-253) for new experience you generate.

**Weaknesses:** Weaknesses are the dark, secret vulnerabilities in a human mind; the nagging doubts and hidden guilts that are usually kept hidden away. Every human has weaknesses; whether Aspects do is not something humans know. Normally, they are harmless; uncomfortable to think about, but not a risk. However, weaknesses can be turned into a weapon, if someone throws them in your face when you are vulnerable. (See “Combat”, below, for how they are used.)

Characters start game with copies of their own weaknesses; you know what could be used to hurt you. Your weaknesses can also be discovered in your mental shadowrun (see “Mental Shadowruns”, below). Note that weaknesses are normal mental items, which may be copyable if you know how.

Any given weakness may only be played effectively once; once the target has been confronted with a particular unspoken fear or insecurity unexpectedly, they can marshal their defenses against it, and the same weakness won’t affect them the second time. This means that you should track which weaknesses have been played on you, either by noting it on your copy of the weakness, or on your stat card. For convenience in tracking, weaknesses all have a number (e.g., “Weakness 1: John Doe” vs. “Weakness 5: John Doe”).

### 3.4 Blackmail

Some item cards (which may be physical, mental, or virtual) are labeled as *Blackmail*. These are evidence which might, if exposed, damage the reputation of a person, corporation, or government.

Any Blackmail item card will be clearly labeled as blackmail, and indicate who can be blackmailed with that item. The blackmail will also indicate the effects of exposure, either explicitly if there is a known mechanical effect (e.g., a corporation’s shares losing value) or vaguely if the effect is not obvious to anyone looking at it. (Note: Even vague blackmail effects will generally have concrete in-game impact, it’s just that you may not be able to tell exactly what form it will take, or it may depend on other events.)

In the hands of most people, blackmail is primarily useful for holding over the head of the target in an attempt to solicit payoffs. Corporate blackmail can sometimes be exchanged directly for corporate shares; these items will be clearly labeled, see the GMs if you wish to use corporate blackmail in this fashion. Other blackmail has no simple mechanical payoff; find a PC who may care and see if you can get them to buy your silence.

Journalists can expose blackmail, and may gain benefits from doing so.

### 3.5 Wills

Earth has rules for property and inheritance. On the station, these rules will be honored as much as the people involved care to; however, all items stored in cyberspace—all virtual items—will, on the event of the owner’s death, be transferred to the owner’s designated beneficiary. This is particularly useful if you own highly valuable virtual items, such as blackmail, research notebooks, or corporate shares.

This only applies, however, if the owner is human. **AIs and other non-human entities are not legally people under current law**; they are not considered capable of owning property, which means that any wills they create will not be honored, and anything they happen to possess will, upon death, be tangled up in lawyers and vanish.

To create or update a will, just send mail to the GMs with the subject line “Will for *Character*”; this represents your transmitting a legal contract back to Earth. The GMs will, in the event of your character’s death, refer to the most recent will we have received.

### 3.6 Macroeconomic Resources

There are three kinds of human macroeconomic resources, each an abstraction over large quantities: Money, Workforce, and Morale. Money is a large unit of liquid currency and transferable assets. Workforce is a large unit of people you can assign to go work on producing something. Morale is a measure of how content a group of people are, and how willing to perform arbitrary (and potentially strange) requests. For example, Morale is needed to declare a new national holiday and actually have businesses and the populace respect it; more is needed to hold a full festival with parties, parades, and feasts; a huge level of Morale would be needed to gather a person from every town in England and have them dance naked in Stonehenge while someone is ritually sacrificed. All of these resources are consumed when used.

Money is transferable between players; however, it cannot be taken from an unwilling person. Workforce and Morale are not transferable unless you know otherwise.

Money owned by an individual is, upon that individual's death, transferred according to any wills that may apply; Money, Morale, and Workforce an individual controls on behalf of an organization will, if anyone else from the organization is available, be transferred to another representative upon the original's death, and otherwise become unavailable.

Macroeconomic resources do not have item cards. If you have control over macroeconomic resources, you will have an ability card telling you so. You may acquire macroeconomic resources over the course of game; track these on your stat card.

### 3.7 Miscellaneous Item Rules

**Uniqueness:** A unique item has special properties that make it impossible to carry along with other unique items. (Effectively, they're magnetic monopoles; they repel each other.) You may only have one unique item in your possession at any given time. If you somehow end up with more than one, either immediately give one to someone else present or it vanishes; return it to the GMs ASAP.

Unique items are also unstashable; you may only hand them off to another person or NPC, or place them in a reward packet in its home shadowrun. (Each unique item will be labeled with its home; if it has a physrep, give the GMs the physrep.)

**If you have a unique item in your possession, you must put a gold star on your name badge, but you may otherwise conceal the item.**

**Uncopyable:** An uncopyable item is one which, even though it is virtual or mental and thus would normally be duplicatable, is not copyable. Uncopyable items are generally valuable.

**Stashing:** All items are unstashable; this includes bodies. Items can't be hidden or left behind in random places. This is a kludge. If you want to put down an item, you may leave it in plain sight in a public area if there are other PCs around, or you may go into a shadowrun and drop it in a reward packet that you reach, or you may give it to another character, or you may drop it off with the GMs and we'll arrange for it to reappear somewhere in game.

You can leave a body where it fell, if you pick it up, it's subject to these limitations.

**Rope:** Rope is not available. There's no way to restrain people.

## 4 Violence, Damage, and Death

### 4.1 Health States

Characters have three possible states, concerning health and damage. When you are **fine**, you may act freely. When you are **dazed**, fall down and drop anything you are holding. You can still hear and remember conversations. You can move slowly, but anyone can trivially stop you from moving. You can talk *quietly*; no yelling for help. You can't take other in-game actions or use abilities. You will recover in five minutes unless another mechanic extends the timer (see "Mental Shadowruns", below.) After recovering from being dazed, **you are immune to combat for 5 minutes or until you challenge someone**; the GMs humbly suggest that you go get help. When **dead**, you are dead.

Dead men tell no tales. If dead, do not give out any information about your character or death to any players. You may remain on the scene to play the part of your corpse; describe obvious information to onlookers ("I have a gunshot wound in my back"). When you leave, leave the front of your name-badge with a description of the body's obvious state to represent your corpse. Take the "I'm Not Here" side to wear. Stack your **physical** items with your body. **Fill out the Death Report, including location of death, and bring it to the GMs personally along with all virtual and mental items.** If your death becomes generally known to the other characters, you may be able to become an observer. Until the game is over, you may not convey game information to any player.

There are ways in game for dead characters to convey limited information to other characters, possibly including information about how they died. No such mechanisms are publicly known.

### 4.2 Sanity, Damage and Death

The physics of this region are peculiar; as long as your mind is solid, your body will persist. However, damage done to either mind or body is reflected in your Sanity stat (San). Sanity is a measure of how mentally and emotionally stable you are. Losing sanity represents losing touch with reality, declining cognitive capacity, and general descent into insanity; roleplay accordingly. Losing sanity may result from things like traumatic experiences, exposure to worlds fundamentally unlike the one you came from, and evidence that fundamentally contradicts one's concept of reality.

Sanity normally starts game at 100; some mechanics (including combat) may tell you to lose sanity<sup>5</sup>. **When your sanity reaches 0, your mind suffers a catastrophic failure, and you die.** (Note: This mechanic applies to humans. Humans do not know at game start what mechanic might apply to Aspects.)

There are ways in game to restore sanity; however, **all combined methods of restoring sanity can never restore more than 15 points per day. No effect may take your sanity above 100.** Minds do not heal quickly, no matter how much help they get.

For example, John Doe starts the day at 90 sanity. He loses 10 in a fight, takes 5 from environmental damage, and performs a ritual that costs him an additional 10 sanity. He is now at 65 sanity. He finds two different people who each have a "heal 10 sanity" ability and are willing to use it on him. The first ability restores 10 sanity; the second, however, only restores 5 because sanity restoration is capped at 15 total sanity per day. This would be true even if most of the damage happened between the two restorations. If John tried to restore all 15 sanity at the start of the day, however, he would be temporarily unable to restore more than 10 points, because he could not bring his sanity above 100.

### 4.3 Combat

All combat—ranged, melee, or strangely alien—in this game is represented with a single mechanic.

Combat uses ranged weapons, specifically nerf Nitefinders; if you don't own one, the Guild will have one for you to borrow. All combats will be between exactly two people; if two people are already fighting, additional people cannot join in. Onlookers should make sure to stay out of the way and not accidentally intercept darts or something.

<sup>5</sup>Sometimes called "sanity points" or "san"; we've tried to standardize, but we've probably missed some.

To start a fight with someone, point at them from within double ZoC and clearly state “Challenge”. Both of you should then move to a clear space, draw your weapons, and start the duel on a three count. Duels are mostly based on player skill at firing and dodging physreps. Once a challenge has happened, neither of the combatants can leave the building-floor until the combat is over.

It is possible that some people will be (temporarily or permanently) immune to combat; if so, when you challenge them, they can respond with “Immune”. Some people will have an ability to guard other people; if you Challenge someone, a person with this ability might respond with “Fight Me Instead”, in which case then the challenger fights the guard rather than the person they originally challenged, and the original challengee is immune to all challenges for 5 minutes.

You have an “Endurance” stat, representing how hard it is to knock you out. A weak human has 3, an average human has 5, and a strong human has 7.

During the fight, you shoot each other, calling out with each dart either an element, or an amount of damage. You will have one or more abilities that give you hit chains of the form “*Element, Number*” or “*Element, Element, Number*”. These specify that if you hit your opponent that many times with darts where you called that element, you can then fire a dart that does that number of points of damage.

For example, if you have the hit chain “Strike, 1”, then you can fire a dart calling “Strike”; if you hit, on the next dart you fire, you can call “1”, and if that hits, the target loses 1 endurance. If a dart misses, that breaks the chain and you have to restart. If you hit with an element dart but the target called “Resist”, that also breaks the chain. There may be hit chains that end with zero damage; if so, they will probably have some other effect listed on their ability card (healing the attacker, for example).

Defensive abilities will generally be of the form “Resist *Element*, x times per combat” (or x times per day). This lets you call “Resist” when hit by a dart of that element, that many times. Some particularly cool defensive abilities are “Resist any element”; those still must be used on an element rather than a damage dart, however. Damage darts, you just have to dodge.

The fight ends when one (or both) participants are reduced to zero Endurance, or when someone concedes. You may always concede a combat; in this case, you count as the loser and the combat immediately ends. The loser is dazed for 5 minutes. The winner is then **required** to play a Victory ability on the loser.

Everyone has one Victory ability, unless you know otherwise:

- The loser takes 10 sanity damage.<sup>6</sup>

Weaknesses are special damage-adders that may be played on a particular target *in combination with* another Victory ability. They may not be played by themselves. Weaknesses are stackable; you may play multiple weaknesses on someone after a single victory.

In addition to a Victory ability, you may choose to start a Mental Shadowrun of the loser if the loser is human. See “Mental Shadowruns”, below.

Endurance regenerates after 5 minutes out of combat; performing a mental shadowrun counts as “being in combat” for this purpose, so that if you choose to shadowrun your defeated opponent, your Endurance does not regenerate until 5 minutes after you leave the shadowrun. Should someone challenge you within those 5 minutes, your Endurance will not regenerate until 5 minutes after that combat, etc.

Some mechanics may refer to HP. This is the same thing as Endurance.<sup>7</sup>

### 4.3.1 Elements

The elements are:

**Strike** This represents mundane fighting; punching, knives, guns.

**Fire, Wood, Metal, Water, Earth, Air, Light** These represent unusual mystical elemental attacks; fireballs, lightning bolts, etc.

If you have the capability to use a non-strike elemental hit chain, you can feel free to use that element for roleplaying special effects (e.g. “I light the room with a floating ball of fire”, “I summon water to fill the glass”, “The earth shakes with my anger”). These *cannot* have any mechanical impact.

<sup>6</sup>Yes, this means that unless you find some other ability, when two people fight, at least one of them is going to end up losing some sanity at the end.

<sup>7</sup>But it fits much better into tiny shadowrun nodes.



## 4.4 Weapons

Weapon effects are on the item card. Weapons will either provide you another hit chain you can do in combat, or do additional sanity damage as a result of victory in combat. To use a weapon, you must have it in your hand and unobstructed. Display it in an obvious manner. **You cannot use more than one weapon at a time.**

You can draw a weapon in response to a challenge, if you can get the weapon card or physrep into hand quickly. (No digging through bags.)

## 4.5 Armor

Armor effects are on the item card, but will generally be resistances. **You may only wear one armor at a time.** If you're wearing armor, it must be obvious; you may wish to tape the card to your name badge.

## 4.6 Killing Blow

**There are no killing blows in this game.** Death only occurs as the result of sanity loss (for humans). You don't know what it takes to kill Aspects.

# 5 Mental Shadowruns

A peculiarity of the strange physics on the station, leaking through the portal from the other side, is that it is possible to physically explore the depths of someone's mind. These are called Mental Shadowruns; all humans have one.

Please note that this is very much a surprise to your characters; however, we are providing rules here so as to let your players know how the mechanic works in advance, and what that large envelope in your packet is.

Upon winning a combat, in addition to playing a victory ability, the victor may choose to begin a mental shadowrun. If this happens to you, you should take out your "*CharacterName* Mental Shadowrun" packet and hand it to the people shadowrunning you. This is a *very* strange experience; you can hear what is going on inside your head, but cannot interfere.

The victor doesn't have to be the leader of the shadowrunning group, but they do have to be part of the group.

Mental shadowruns work just like any other shadowrun for the people who are exploring it; see the Shadowrunning public greensheet for details.

Because mental shadowruns are always launched as the result of combat, the person whose mind is being explored (we'll call them the target) will be dazed for five minutes while this is occurring. In the event that the mental shadowrun is still being used after five minutes, the target remains dazed, and both the target and the people doing the shadowrun start taking sanity damage. For each minute the target should be awake but is not because the shadowrun is in use, the target takes 1 Sanity damage and *every person* in the shadowrun group takes 2 Sanity damage.<sup>8</sup> In the event that the target dies of Sanity loss while the shadowrun group is still there, each person in the shadowrun takes an additional 25 Sanity damage.

(In short, if you're doing a mental shadowrun and the target wakes up, you probably want to leave as quickly as possible; and generally, you want to go into mental shadowruns prepared to move quickly.)

When the mental shadowrun is finished, the packet should be returned to its owner.

## 6 Charges

Skills in this game require "charges"; this is, approximately, a combination of willpower and concentration that will let you productively perform some activity you know how to do.

<sup>8</sup>Why yes, it is very painful to be doing a shadowrun somewhere that is trying to fight you.

Everyone has a base income of 5 charges per day, restoring whenever you come into game for the day after resting.<sup>9</sup> Most people will be able to acquire several additional daily charges through other mechanics. **Unused charges, including bonus charges from abilities and effects, do NOT stick around from day to day—use them or lose them.**

You have some number of charge powered abilities, labeled either “Foo” or “Superior Foo” (where Foo will be something like “Physics” or “History”). Things that require the use of charges include nodes in node trees (see the Shadowrunning greensheet), rituals, notebooks, and possibly other greensheets; in all of these cases, the requirement will be labeled “Foo N” or “Spend N Foo charges”. If you have the ordinary Foo skill, that requires N charges (which can be split across multiple people who all have the ordinary Foo skill); if you have the Superior Foo skill, it requires one charge, no matter how high the number.

There is no way to transfer charges between people unless you know otherwise. However, unless specifically indicated otherwise, you can always get someone else to spend charges for you.

## 6.1 Item Charges

Some items may also provide charges. These items will normally have a set of boxes on them, each representing a charge. If you use the charge, check off the box.

Unless an item says otherwise, the charges it provides can be channeled through any skill that the person holding it has. Some items provide charges that can only be used on specific skills; these will generally allow even someone who does not have those skills to spend the item charges as though they do.

Item charges are useful because they do not expire at the end of the day, provide charges above a person’s daily limit, and can be transferred between people (by transferring the item); however, once all charges are consumed, the associated item is destroyed.

## 7 Exploring Ouranios

Exploring the alien world of Ouranios is inherently dangerous. Some regions are more dangerous than others, and danger may vary over time. Whenever you leave a region, you take Sanity damage depending on how dangerous it is.

Each region (floor of a building; so, 2-2, 2-3, and 6-2 would all be separate regions) in Ouranios will contain one sign labeled “Ouranios Node”, which is the metaphorical center of gravity of this region. The bottom of the sign has a “Danger” meter, with values from 0 to 4. There should be a paperclip on the sign indicating what the current Danger value of the region is.<sup>10</sup>

If you travel carefully through a region, finding and tagging its Node (i.e., getting close enough to read the Danger value on the sign), then you take that Node’s Danger value in Sanity damage on exiting the region. If you are in a hurry, however, and leave the region (again, that’s a building-floor) without finding its Node, you will always take 4 Sanity damage, regardless of the region’s current Danger value.<sup>11</sup>

If you’re traveling with someone who tagged a node, they can let you use the Danger value they saw instead of the full 4 Sanity damage, even if you haven’t tagged the node yourself. If you transport someone Dazed through Ouranios, they take the lower of the damage that you are taking, or that they would take if they were traveling that route themselves.

Some people may have abilities which change how much damage they take when traveling through Ouranios.

### 7.1 The Safe Zone

The exception to these rules is the Safe Zone adjacent to the portal: 12-1, 4-1, and 4-2. These regions are guaranteed safe, and never cause sanity damage to travelers; in addition, there may be more than one node in these regions.

<sup>9</sup>While the GMs are not *requiring* you to go home and get a full night’s sleep to recharge your charge income, we do encourage it.

<sup>10</sup>If a paperclip has fallen off, please tell the GMs as soon as possible; assume the region is at danger level 2.

<sup>11</sup>There’s nothing the wild residents of Ouranios are more attracted to than someone who is running. . .

## 8 Public Greensheets

Not all characters in this game care about every mechanic. In general, mechanics in the public greensheet list you will not need to remember in a hurry; don't worry too much about memorizing them, you can look up the details as needed. There are also several mechanics which are not relevant to players with Aspect characters.

- **Shadowrunning:** Contains details of how shadowruns work in this game.
- **Research and Engineering:** Contains mechanics for research notebooks and various steps you may encounter in them.
- **Social Links:** Human characters in this game can establish relationships with each other that are mutually beneficial. This is a core mechanic for humans; humans should be familiar with it.
- **The Question Web:** Contains an explanation of a public research mechanic. Humans probably want to be at least vaguely familiar with this, although a copy of the sheet will be posted next to the mechanic.
- **Megacorps:** How megacorps and the stock market work. Unless you're in a megacorp or a government, you probably don't care much. Ouranios residents don't need to read it.
- **Human Politics:** Contains an explanation of diplomacy and diplomatic negotiations. Critical for diplomats (you'll have a copy in your packets); any other humans who are interested in getting involved in diplomacy and politics should feel free to read it. **Ouranios residents may not read it.**

## 9 Miscellaneous

### 9.1 The Importance of Bags

All human characters will have an approximately half-a-standard-sheet-of-paper sized manilla envelope that they will need to carry with them at all times. (This is your mental shadowrun, which you will need to have available if someone beats you in combat.) Even if you normally leave your packet at home, you'll want to plan to carry this part around during game. Bags or very large pockets are recommended, for convenience.

### 9.2 Entering and Leaving Game

Because traveling through parts of this world can have mechanical effects, players may leave game (e.g., to get dinner or go sleep) anywhere, **but must come back into game wherever they left.** If you pass through gamespace when entering or leaving, go Not Here; try not to look at any signs you pass or observe any PC activity.

Unless you're somewhere where a character could obviously spend the night, don't leave game in front of other players. Don't leave game suddenly to avoid an ambush or someone you don't want to see you.

### 9.3 Overnight Tasks

Many research notebooks and other mechanics will call for an Overnight Task. You cannot perform these unless you know otherwise. (They do, however, take overnight, as the name suggests, should you find someone who is capable of performing one or acquire the ability yourself.)

### 9.4 Headband Colors

A white or yellow headband represents an observer.

A red headband represents an Aspect, a strange, amorphous, seemingly-sentient creature, like you saw in the shared hallucination.

A pink or purple headband represents a strange creature of the Aspects' world that seems non-sentient.

A blue headband represents a translucent hologram.

A silver headband represents a robot, an obviously mechanical being.

A green headband represents some type of Earth animal.

## 9.5 Game Times

Game runs from 7pm on Friday to 3am on Sunday. Game may end early. Cleanup and Wrapup will be at 2pm on the second Sunday.

Players are encouraged to start game at gamestart if possible. Start game at the start location indicated in your character sheet. There will be a cocktail reception in the SpaceStation One Common Area (34-301) at 7:30. **You must remain on the space station, and cannot pass through the portal, until 9. This is a kluge.**

There will be a gamebreak from 6am Tuesday to 6pm Wednesday. You can email and talk during gamebreak, but not take any mechanical action.

For mechanical purposes, the day changes at 6am the next morning, so you don't get a new use of any once-per-day abilities at midnight.

Thus, mechanically Game has 8 days: Friday, Saturday, Sunday, Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday.

## 9.6 Game Areas

SpaceStation One includes all publicly-accessible areas of buildings 24, 34, and 36. You may travel freely between them. You may travel outside between 24-0 and 34-1. There's nothing interesting in 36-1; if Patrol happens, try to stay out of their way.

All publicly-accessible floors of buildings 1–12 are Ouranios. You can only travel through Ouranios as described in the "Exploring Ouranios" section, above.

You can cross the Infinite Corridor, but don't take game action there. 7-1, 10-1, and 8-1 are basically just the Infinite Corridor, and are not in game. 12-0 is also not in game. 6C-0 is the same as 6-0.

You cannot visit other areas of campus in game without a mechanic. Take no in-game actions in dorms or elsewhere outside the established gamespace.

**Game Locations:** The following locations are out of game but mechanically important:

- 12-142: The GM room
- 12-122: The Box Room; check your folder in the Box when you come into game every day. There are also folders here that mechanics will direct you to get things from.

The following locations are limited-access mechanics rooms; have no combat there, have no conversations about anything other than mechanics in them, and do not spend longer in them than you need to.<sup>12</sup>

- 4-253: The human mechanics room. Humans may have greensheets which tell them about mechanics here. Aspects cannot enter unless they know otherwise.
- 4-251: The Aspect mechanics room. Aspects may have greensheets which tell them about mechanics here. Humans cannot enter unless they know otherwise.

The main cafeteria on SpaceStation One, where the cocktail reception will be held at 7:30 PM on Friday, January 25th, is in 34-301.

The Portal between the station and Ouranios is at the 24-1/12-1 bridge. This is the only way to travel between the station and Ouranios. You must not explore Ouranios until after 9pm Friday (this is a kluge to give everyone an equal opportunity). You can cross into 12-1 to visit the Box Room or GM Room, but doing so is not considered "entering Ouranios" or "passing through the Portal" for mechanics like mempackets.

<sup>12</sup>In other words, don't take advantage of the fact that some people can't go in them.

## 9.7 Cellphones, Zephyr, etc.

Although you are welcome to use whatever communications methods you prefer both in and out of character, we do remind you that this is a *live action* roleplaying game; don't use electronic communications to replace or avoid in-person communications.

You may want to sub to the zephyr class "contact"; you can use it to say hi to other players, and to ask if a GM is around (but don't actually ask the GM a question on the public class, as players may be listening!). If you have an Athena account but are not familiar with zephyr, it's a wonderful IM system that many guild folks use regularly; SIPB has an excellent "Inessential Zephyr" document that Google will point you at which will tell you how to use it.

### 9.7.1 Pregame Communication

You may communicate in a lightweight fashion (no mechanical discussion, no deep planning, but normal conversation) with people who you are with immediately pregame. For residents of Ouranios or SpaceStation One, this would be other residents of said location; for passengers on the Virgin Galactic shuttle, this is fellow passengers; for anyone else who came up on a ship with other people, it is fellow passengers on that ship.

You may *not* communicate with people who you knew pregame, at least, not about anything happening in game. (If you really want to go have conversations about your college days or what your family had for lunch last week... we won't stop you, but we'll be rather surprised in most cases.)

If you're not sure who you might be able to talk to, ask the GMs.

## 9.8 Printing Things and Otherwise Acquiring Items

Some research or other mechanics may direct you to print something using a code. Visit the game webpage at <http://web.mit.edu/xavid/www/contact/> and enter the code to get a PDF you can print. If you have trouble printing or it's more convenient, you can also pick up a copy of what you get from the folder of the same name in the Box. The Box will have additionally have a stock of blank item cards which you can take to make common items such as RTIs yourself.

## 9.9 Game Mommy

This game has a Game Mommy, a kludgite-trustworthy NPC. The game mommy's role is to provide a resource for new players, uncertain players, or anyone who's having a rough time or is out of ideas. He is guaranteed to not tell your secrets to other PCs; will provide advice about anything from how to play your character, how to use your mechanics, how to win your plots, and even how to have a good time; and is also quite nice, say hello. If you're stuck, nervous, or just want to tell *somebody* about that cool secret thing that just happened, the Game Mommy is a good place to start.

Keep in mind that other players may eavesdrop, so you may wish to go to a private location before divulging secrets to the Game Mommy.

Our game mommy has an in-character identity, as the Drunk, your neighborhood trustworthy bartender who loves to listen. Halftime "Matt" Peairs has kindly volunteered.

Ten-days are large, complicated, and can be a bit disorienting to less experienced played. You will have a *much* better time if you talk to the Game Mommy as soon as you start being confused or overwhelmed than if you wait and try to tough it out. Besides, he'll probably pour you a drink.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>Non-alcoholic only. ;)

## 9.10 Contacting the GMs

There should always be a GM on duty in the GM room (12-142) from 6 pm to 1 am; extended hours will happen at our convenience. For non-urgent questions or to notify us, you can e-mail the GMs at [contact-gms@mit.edu](mailto:contact-gms@mit.edu). In addition, you can zephyr us on -c contact-gms. **Do not subscribe to contact-gms**; just send us a ping requesting a GM. Our phone numbers are printed on the playerlist; however, we do ask that you not call us after GM office hours unless there is an urgent query that can't wait until the next day.

## 10 On Making Things Up

It has come to the GMs' attention that many players do not feel comfortable making statements about their characters' backgrounds without explicit approval from the GMs, for fear of accidentally making a mistake. The Contact GMs invite you to make things up in this game. Your characters have a lifetime's worth of experiences; we have kept your character sheets much shorter than that, to concentrate on the parts which really are important to the shape of the game. Your character sheet may not tell you your religion, or your sexuality, where you went to college, or your opinion on genetically modified foods. People may ask you about these, or many other things; sometimes, they'll even ask you about your background as part of a mechanic, such as a research notebook. In this case, you should *make something up*. Create your character's background and opinions as *you* feel is appropriate, and roleplay accordingly. The Contact world is much like the real one, and just as large; feel free to use real-world things as inspiration, or make up reasonable-sounding minor changes that might have happened in the last thirty years. And in the unlikely event that two characters who don't know each other both turn out to have been Harvard class of 2020? Well, it's a big campus, these things happen. Perhaps you can reminisce together and find some common ground in-game.

## 11 Closing Notes

These rules are imperfect. The GMs may violate the letter of the rules to preserve the spirit. We hope these rules are reasonably clear, but if you have any doubts about your interpretation, talk it over with us in advance. We should also add, as much as we hate to admit it, we GMs are human: when all of our carefully laid plans are going haywire, we may lose our cool. The best way to deal with people is remaining calm and friendly, especially when everyone is tired and hungry.

We hope you have lots of fun. Good luck.